DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 074 931 HE 003 903

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TITLE The National Educational Establishment: Its Impact on Federal Programs and Institutional Policies.
INSTITUTION American Council on Education, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 15 Jan 73
NOTE 17p.; Speech presented at the annual meeting of the Association of American Colleges (San Francisco, January 1973)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Administration; Federal Government; *Higher Education; *Interinstitutional Cooperation; *Organizational Climate; *Professional Associations

ABSTRACT

The role of educational associations and agencies that are the constituent and associated "organization members" of the American Council on Education plus at least another dozen or two associations or agencies of national scope with considerable interest in postsecondary education are discussed in relation to their impact on federal programs and institutional policies. Their impact has been significant despite the diversity of educational institutions in the nation, the voluntary organizational arrangements, and the relatively small number of people working in the area of government relations. To improve federal relations emphasis is placed on institutional cooperation and the climate the association membership provides. (MJM)

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ED 074931

PRESENTATION

at

ANNUAL MEETING

of the

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN COLLEGES

January 15, 1973

San Francisco Hilton Hotel

by

THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT: ITS IMPACT ON FEDERAL PROGRAMS AND INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

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HE 003 903

Session: The National Educational Establishment in Washington - Its Impact on Federal Programs and Institutional Policies

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Annual Meeting of the
Association of American Colleges
San Francisco, California

January 15, 1973

The National Educational Establishment: Its Impact on Federal Programs and Institutional Policies

Since there is considerable ambiguity, as well as opproprium, in the words "The National Educational Establishment", perhaps it would be useful for me to describe this establishment as I see it for the purposes of this discussion. When I use the term broadly, I refer to the 200 associations and agencies that are the constituent and associated "organization members" of the Council plus at least another dozen or two associations or agencies of national scope with considerable interest in postsecondary education. Such non-Council members would include, as examples, the American Management Association, Education Commission of the States, and Social Science Research Council.

Narrowing the establishment to the Washington scene and, more specifically, to the Dupont Circle neighborhood, one finds over fifty organizations, about three dozen of which are housed in 1 Dupont Circle.

Within this group are those fourteen associations whose chief executives form the informal group known as the Washington "Secretariat." My guess is that the membership of the associations comprising the Secretariat group would come close to equalling the 2,600 institutions listed in the USOE higher education directory. A recent study of the Secretariat indicates that the combined operating budgets of the fourteen associations approach $7 million.

An analysis of multiple membership in six of the Secretariat associations (AAC, AACJC, AASCU, AAU, ACE, NASULGC) shows that while the Council, with over 1,300 members, is the largest, 80% of its members hold membership in at least one of the other five organizations. Membership in at least three of the six organizations is held by 136 institutions.

Representatives of higher education in these associations interact with the federal government in a wide variety of ways, and it is possible in the compass of this presentation to describe this complex network of interaction in only the broadest of terms. In terms of targets, the parties are the members of the Congress and the executive departments with connections with postsecondary education. The contents of such contacts as we have with them concern primarily the development of legislation affecting education, and the implementation of federal programs. The processes involve the exchange of information among the associations, the development of policy positions, and organizing the effort to secure the passage of desirable legislation. An important activity of virtually all associations is that of informing their constituencies at all levels of federal activities which are particularly relevant to them.

It is obvious from this brief description that the governmental relations of education are widely distributed and comprise only a part of the activities of the associations. I asked several of my colleagues to join me in estimating the number of people who could be said to be devoting a significant fraction of their time to federal relations. Our guess is that about thirty-five people are devoting all of their time to federal relations and about twenty-four are devoting half their time to this area, for a total of fifty people. These figures include executives of membership associations, of disciplinary organizations, of functional groups, such as the business officers or registrars, as well as representatives of specific campuses or systems. Because a substantial number of association personnel devote at least some of their time to federal relations, this figure of fifty is undoubtedly an underestimate of the total effort but, even if we were to double it, my guess would be that the human resources assigned to that task fall far below that devoted to comparable activities by other segments of our society such as industry or elementary or secondary education, for example.

It would, of course, be a mistake to limit a description of the federal relations of postsecondary education to the activities of the associations. There are an enormous number of individuals from the educational community who serve on panels, advisory committees, and or consultants. These mechanisms have a steady and substantial role in influencing federal policy and programs. Indirectly the associations play a significant role, .In turn in these relationships, through assisting agencies in identifying people who might be useful to the agencies, in providing the people who with information that will make them more informed and effective, and in disseminating the insights and information which the consultants provide to the wider community.

I don't have to remind any of you that there is no single agency that supervises and administers this effort, to which all parties are responsible and from which they receive their assignments. The principal instrumentalities are independent, autonomous associations and institutions. The mechanism of consensus building and coordination are voluntary and, by and large, informal. This is a subject to which I will return but, before doing so, I believe that in any discussion of the ways in which our collective performance can be improved -- and that indeed is our constant concern -- it is useful to take a look at the record with respect to effectiveness.

To get one estimate, I reviewed the position taken by the ACE Commission on Federal Relations on legislative or administrative practice over the past decade and made a judgment as to the extent to which the position had a significant impact on federal behavior. During this period, the Commission recorded positions on 45 issues in the areas of student aid, facilities, institutional aid, research, graduate education, taxation and fiscal policy, and cost accounting procedures. Of these 45 issues, including either legislative or executive action, on which the position was explicit enough to be able to say whether or not the effect was successful, the results are as follows:

Successful (completely)	17
Successful in large part	10
Minimally successful	5
Failed	8
Still Pending	5

I hasten to say that I am not claiming this record for the Council itself; in some instances the Council led the effort, in others another group may have played the leading role. It does represent what the entire enterprise I described earlier has done, with the important addendum that a large ingredient in this process is the collective effort of the individual institutions. Our role in Washington is to provide guidance for those institutional efforts, to stir them into action when appropriate and to suggest ways in which their efforts will be most useful. There is no question in my mind that, particularly with respect to legislation, the orchestrated activities of individual institutions are much more effective than similar efforts on the part of association representatives. I must also observe that many of the programs were brought into being through the persuasive efforts of the administration concerned and individual members of Congress themselves.

A frame of reference for evaluating the record I just presented is not easy to come by but I hazard the conclusion that it is quite good and much better than the collective impression the higher education community has of it.

As I looked down the list I was struck by the positions, identified early and persistently pursued, that are now important Federal policies: virtually all of the current features of the student aid programs, the facilities construction support programs that played such an important role in the years of expansion, the indirect cost regulations, the National Institute of Education, the NDEA fellowships, support for college level technical education, federal grants for library resources, expanded support for developing institutions, and cost of education grants for compensatory education, to mention just a few. We failed to get a federal charter for TIAA-CREF, the elimination of forgiveness feature of NDEA loans, elimination of compulsory cost sharing for sponsored research, increase

in fellowships and traineeships, and increased funding for international programs and educational and cultural exchange programs.

One's estimate of our success with respect to institutional aid last year depends on the point of view. The latest legislation accepts the concept in principle but not primarily in the form we advocated it and it has not yet been funded.

This record of considerable success was, as I said earlier, achieved by a loose confederation of voluntary associations with vested interests and specialized concerns and any thoughtful effort to reorganize our efforts must begin with this perspective. None of us is satisfied with the record and certainly none of us believes that the present mode is adequate for the demands of the future, and I want to turn now to some of our most obvious deficiencies.

We are quite justifiably criticized for the adequacy of the information we can provide to the policy makers on the basis of which they can appraise the present state of affairs in higher education or the implications of various public policy options. We have tended to get into policy discussion too late in the process, often at the stage when particular pieces of legislation have already been introduced. We have paid too little attention, relatively speaking, to the departments other than HEW within the executive branch both with respect to the development of policy and the implementation of legislation. We present too diffuse a structure for legislators or executives to know where to turn for help. Our consultative mechanisms are, by and large, informal and as a result information exchange is often imperfect and we lose important and useful contributions. As a second consequence of this informality we legitimately incur the criticism that we leave people out of the process who ought to be included.

There is one set of criticisms that is frankly still a puzzle to me after a year in Washington. I refer to those that concern the spokesman role. I can

identify at least four contexts in which this criticism arises and the argument is different and the remedies are different depending on the context. I have occasionally been tempted to write an essay on the various meaning of the expression "There is no voice for higher education", and I can only give you an outline of its contents today. One meaning is: "Higher education is a very diffuse community and opinions within it vary so widely that it is difficult to ascertain what the view of higher education is." I agree it is a diffuse community and that on any issue there is certain to be a wide range of opinions. Sometimes the statement means: "You have made no effort to achieve a consensus." I'm certain this has been and is still true about certain issues. I suspect that as time goes on this will be less and less true on important matters. The attempt must be made; we should try to reconcile most of our differences within the educational community itself. Where this is not possible we should be explicit about the failure and meticulous about presenting the various positions, so that the reconciliation can be made by others. I think we ought also to be clear, however, about the fact that too much pressure toward consensus may have harmful social consequences. Some of the choices as to where education ought to go should be made by the representatives of society, whether political or private. Further, consensus among conflicting parties is often achieved by providing something for everyone. This may not, however, be the best social policy. Finally, some of the people who urge this consensus role upon us most vigorously might turn into our most severe critics if, as a result, we become a monolithic structure.

A third meaning is: "You claim that there is consensus but there really isn't and I know because some of the parties to the consensus have told me privately that they don't agree." Even this has several possible meanings. In some cases it means, "Why don't you have more control over the parties!" More often the implication is that we are claiming more than is warranted -- a credibility problem.

Or finally, it may mean "I have some people from higher education on my side." Again, some of these complaints are well founded. There are end runs; we don't have strict disciplinary sanctions against them. We may appear to have achieved a useful consensus which doesn't last. I doubt, however, that there has been a deliberate effort to claim more for it than was warranted; at least we should make every effort to avoid any misconception.

Finally, the expression can mean: "True you arrived at a consensus but it is wrong; it is different from mine, and it was not accepted. Therefore, there must be something wrong with you or the way you proceeded." This one is harder to evaluate. If we are going to use ultimate effectiveness as a criterion for evaluating consensus then the prudent course is to count the votes in advance and advocate what has the greatest chance of passing -- a dubious practice at best. Nor can we use the position of our strongest allies as the only point on the compass.

The recent experience with respect to institutional aid provides illustrations of all these criticisms about consensus. Postsecondary education did indeed have a wide variety of views. We did, however, try, probably harder than ever before, to arrive at a consensus. The consensus did not inhibit individuals, institutions, and associations from advancing their own differing views and, finally, since we achieved less than we had hoped and in oppostition to some of our staunchest friends, the consensus position was alleged to be wrong in the first place.

As I said, this area is still one of substantial semantic confusion but I have tried to indicate what I think our obligation is: to attempt to achieve consensus on significant issues and to identify clearly the parties involved, and, failing that, to achieve consensus to present clearly the differing points of view. I would add for the Council the prerogative, if not the obligation, to state its own position whether the consensus position or not.)

With respect to the other deficiencies I mentioned earlier, efforts are now being made under the leadership of ACE together with considerable support from all parties, to strengthen our ability to provide assistance in the evaluation of public policy options, to increase our interaction with the executive branch and to improve our coordinating and consultative procedures.

This brings me to the important and exceedingly relevant topic of relationships among the associations, a topic I suspect you have been waiting for me to get around to more specifically.

There are a number of forces that will have the predictable effect of moving associations together, toward greater pooling of resources, more joint planning, more willingness to participate in consensus building, perhaps even some voluntary renunciation of autonomy and, remarkable as it may seem, some assimilation of one association by another through mergers. Among these forces are the substantial pressures at the state level for systems of postsecondary education. Already thirty seven states have embarked on such efforts and there are several manifestations of the federal interest in the same direction, including most recently the 1202 Commissions. There are pressures within the educational community for more unified efforts and, while not unanimous, a substantial interest in strengthening the validity and credibility of ACE as a spokesman for higher education. Where state coordinating mechanisms exist, there is emphasis on the pooling of resources, the organization of consortia, and agreed upon specialization or function. revenue sharing Finally, in the list of these currents one must add the emergence of common problems which will emphasize common interests among institutions such as financing, coordination and innovation.

My hunch about the trend with respect to these state boards of planning and coordination is that more and more of them will be lay boards, with fewer and fewer members who are official representatives of segments of the academic community. This trend, which I regard as desirable, will have the effect of depoliticizing the process of obtaining support for individual institutions or types of institutions

with, hopefully, a consequent smaller emphasis on political activity in the interest of specialized categories of institutions on the part of the associations.)

In the face of these forces, it seems unlikely to me that the relationships among associations can remain the way they are in the long run. As I said earlier, I believe there will be increased coordination and cooperation and, gradually over time, some renunciation of autonomy in the common interest. I emphasize that this process will be gradual and will arise out of the common need for all types of institutions to work together for the common good.

There are, of course, counterforces to this pressure toward increased inter-associational cooperation. One of them is the considerable specialization of interests. Historically, associations arise out of the special interests of specific categories of institutions, of functions; and often they split off from larger associations because of the failure, either actual or perceived, of the original association to meet their specialized needs. These ruptures leave a history; if cooperation was difficult before it is harder now. In addition to the fact of separation, the specialized interests mean that common interests are harder to find.

It is only being candid to note that each association is under strong pressure to justify its existence to its membership and it does this most easily through direct service to members. It is less prudent to participate in more general activities, and it is certainly still more hazardous if the activity is a collaborative one. The association <u>appears</u> not to be engaging in some program that is obviously of interest to members.

Let me cite the topic of collective bargaining. This is clearly of interest to almost all of the associations. It was equally clear last Spring that no association was adequately serving its membership <u>and</u> that some services to all or most institutions could be provided by a single office. Accordingly, with some encouragement from the American Council on Education, a proposal for support of an office to

deal with the informational needs of member institutions was developed by this Association (the AAC), the Land-Grant group, the Association of State Colleges and Universities, and the National Association of College and University Business Officers. When funded the office will be housed by this Association, the Association of American Colleges. This is obviously a rational solution and a wise one. But I think the members of all these associations, as well as the membership of other associations, should recognize that the associations executives are taking some risks. The activity is most clearly identified with one of the associations and less clearly with the others and these may appear not to be discharging their responsibilities. Understanding and approval of this kind of joint enterprise on the part of the membership will reduce this risk and increase the number of such joint undertakings.

Since coming to Washington I have been pushing the concept of the chosen instrument, meaning that we should collectively agree that whenever appropriate one association will be the responsible party for discharging a particular function. The implications are, further, that no one else will seek to duplicate and all will help the chosen instrument. This has the same risks as the joint enterprise with an additional one: the chosen instrument will serve the needs of non-members. This, too, calls for mature understanding on the part of the membership.

Another imperfection in our coordinating mechanisms results from the fact that, coordination takes time. It doesn't just happen; people have to allocate time to the task. It is my observation, not just in Washington but on our campuses and in our states, that there is less coordination than there might be because of limited resources for the coordination task itself. Busy staffs of associations, like busy presidents, often fail to coordinate or inform, because of lack of time. Since the Council has, by common consensus, this primary responsibility for coordination, I have been emphasizing that the staff of the ACE must not involve itself exclusively in continuing operating responsibilities, but must rather leave time for this

coordinating role, hoping to reduce the demands on the staffs of other associations for this purpose. There is no question in my mind that the Council has not staffed itself adequately for this function in the area of federal relations. There are just <u>three</u> people in the Council who are assigned the full time responsibility in this area. The remarkable things is than any coordination takes place at all. As I have said, we are changing this situation.

Since I have drifted into discussing the role of the ACE let me make explicit my own operating assumptions about its role and its relationships with the other associations.

a. I assume that the existing associations are primarily responsible to the specific and unique needs of their institutional members.

b. Where there are common interests the Council has primary responsbility for developing a collective response to these common concerns. This does not mean that the Council need operate the activity, merely because it cuts across the interests of several groups. The excellent service particularly in the area of legal requirements with respect to women provided to all associations by the Association of American Colleges is a case in point. Where it is clear that the activity cannot be as well conducted elsewhere, the ACE should pick it up; otherwise not.

This is an orchestrating, coordinating role and I want to be explicit about some of the hazards for ACE in this. We will not be identified in the eyes of <u>our</u> membership with a large number of activities. Orchestrating is not a flashy enterprise. It is our form of the risk I mentioned earlier, and we are equally dependent on understanding by our membership to reduce the likelihood that we will be tempted to preempt exciting functions in the interests of justifying our existence. This is a further risk: we cannot help but appear to be operating from some Olympian position, high and mighty and above it all -- encouraging others to be noble and statesmanlike. It is a rueful fact of life that if ACE picks up a responsibility, it must be prepared to be accused of running a competing activity or of preempting

the field; if it does not, it is ignoring a need, and if it coordinates it, is trying to run things.

Coordination in Washington is not different in dynamics from coordination on a campus or in a region. Our skills are no greater and our commitments no more resolute. I mention this so that we have a common frame of reference and suggest that your standard for evaluating our efforts might be your own experience with cooperation in your own setting.

But, just as with you, the social, financial and political forces existing today make it imperative that we do better than we have done and the typical performance with respect to cooperation I just suggested is not adequate for the future -- for you or for us in the associations.

I have found a genuine and sincere commitment on the part of the association executives to develop more and more effective means of cooperation. I have asked the elected officers and the executive heads of the five largest institutional membership associations to constitute themselves as an informal advisory committee to me in discharging the Council's role as coordinator. These are the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, the Association of American Universities, the Association of American Colleges, and the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges. All accepted eagerly and on January 9 we had our first meeting.

It was very successful.
Its mandate is:

Facilitate interassociation cooperation

Assist in delineation of respective roles and agreement upon joint responsibilities;

Exchange information and in other ways seek to minimize duplication of effort.

We have started informally, but we plan to establish it as a formal coordinating committee within the Counal. The associations currently represent 95% of all institutions, and the precomposition can be justified in those terms. Other membership groups can be added if the need for doing so becomes apparent. The coordinating group, I hasten to add, is but one of many and is not intended to supplant any existing group.

I think I have made clear that I believe understanding and support by the member institutions of these various ways of sharing responsibilities are crucial to future developments of this wholesome trend. Inevitably these new modes of cooperation require some sharing of responsibility or the delegation of responsibility -- loss of autonomy, in other words. This can only be done if it is urged by and accepted by the membership. You constitute an important part of the environment in which these changes take place and I welcome this opportunity to encourage you to make the environment for coordination an encouraging and supportive one.

Thus far I have discussed interassociational cooperation primarily in the context of organizing our service activities so as to maximize the effective use of resources.

But, the importance of and need for interassociational cooperation goes far beyond the administrative arrangements of the sort I have described. It is my belief that not only cooperation among associations but among institutions flourishes when we have a common commitment to some larger goals than our own narrow interests. I believe that the ACE, by virtue of its heterogeneous institutional membership and the membership of the associations, has a special responsibility for the articulation of these larger goals.

And there are some larger goals now clearly visible which bode well for increasing the sense of family within higher education, amid all of its diversity. Surely all of us embrace the large purpose of increasing educational opportunity for all our citizens. We share the great objective of achieving a system of financing of postsecondary education which maintains both the existence and the quality of private as well as public institutions, two-year as well as four-year, baccalaureate as well as graduate research institutions and the development of new types of institutions, as well -- not because they have a divine right to be perpetuated but because they are needed. And this financing scheme must not be such as to jeopardize equality of opportunity nor institutional integrity. And there are others: increasing the effectiveness with which the skills and knowledge of

trained people are applied to our national needs for relief from poverty, improvement of our environment, better health care and more effective family assistance programs. We all have the objective of improving the effectiveness of educational institutions, and not merely maintaining them.

The more clearly we embrace these broader goals and the more ardently we seek the best system of postsecondary education for the good of the whole society, the easier and the more effective will be our cooperative efforts and the more obvious will be our commitment to the public interest.

This is by way of saying that one cannot have effective governmental relations without a program. And this is the principal argument for associations to have an internal as well as external role, a leadership role with respect to the educational programs of the institutions themselves. This is a part of my assigned topic to which I can refer only briefly. Only through contact with the educational issues and administrative problems at institutions can associations be effective even in their governmental relations role. Effective contacts with government involve a flow of information and advice in both directions. The associations cannot be trusted transmitters in this exchange if they are not knowledgeable about the basic tasks of the educational institutions they represent. In turn, vital relationship between educational institutions and the supporting society cannot be maintained if the needs and concerns of government are not understood and transmitted clearly, sympathetically, and helpfully. In short, associations can only be effective in their external role if they vigorously pursue a leadership role within the educational community.

It is obvious to all of us that this entire country is in the process of re-evaluating its commitments in education, welfare, the environment, foreign affairs, and many other areas. It is examining the amount of the nation's resources we are going to assign to these programs. The orientation in the past has been for spokesmen to ask for increased support for worthy efforts in each of these areas. The budget posture was to request annual increments in funding. It is equally

clear that at the present moment this traditional habit is not going to do the job. There are too many high priority items competing for the funds available, both public and private.

If we are going to be effective in our relations to government, we must be willing participants in this process of reexamination. We can claim no exemption from it. We cannot ask for "add ons" when other important areas are obliged to cut back. We must be prepared to face our own priority questions and account for our own behavior. Government spends enormous amounts for education and I suggest that the realities call for us to examine whether we can increase the usefulness of these existing resources to the health of the institution and the consequent health of the society.

I am not suggesting that your Washington colleagues are waivering in their determination to secure more adequate funding. But I am suggesting that to do this we must have better arguments, more evidence of effective use of resources than we have ever had before. Particularly this requires that we make clear the consequences of the various policy options that might be prepared. Broadly put, we must have a program.

I believe it will be the case that after this process of critical reexamination of national goals and programs has taken place, there will be a determination to increase governmental revenues for them. Meanwhile, however, we must be full and helpful participants in this process of reexamination.

In summary, I have tried to make the following points: the associations in Washington reflect the diversity of educational institutions in the nation at large. The organizational arrangements among them are purely voluntary. The number of people working in this vast complex area of governmental relations is relatively small. In spite of these facts, their impact has been significant. Nonetheless, there is need for significant improvement in associational behavior and I have outlined some of the defects. There are strenuous efforts toward, and visible evidence of, improved cooperation among the associations to increase the amount and the

effectiveness of the resources devoted to governmental relations. After all this has been said, the present situation calls for much more attention than has yet been paid to it, to full participation in the national reappraisal process to which I referred. Helping to lead that process is an important responsibility of the associations. While our imperfections in federal relations are more widely diagnosed, they are every bit as great with respect to the internal role. Fortunately, as I have suggested, the roles are not incompatible. As we improve our performance in one, we will also improve our performance in the other. Finally, let me repeat, the climate that the membership provides is the significant factor in the speed with which these improvements take place.